/205 cont./

584

Method of Contracting a Marriage

[581] The Indian has many ways to conclude a naturally legitimate marriage. He must in the first place have good qualities as a hunter and worker. When he has selected the one who is to be the pearl of his eye and has enough courage to ask her parents for her personally, he makes his visits at night to the family /206/ of his intended. These visits are silent until [583] the old people ask him the reason for his coming. The young man at first is confused in his answers, but if he observes by the kindness of the questions that there is a thread of hope, he returns and from time to time makes gifts of maize, cheese, and fruits of his labors, such as gourds, beans, and birds hunted by him.

If the young man's manner pleases the old people, they do everything possible to get their daughter to consent, but often the suitor loses everything, either because the old people do not like him or because she abhors him. This last case happens particularly when the suitor is somewhat older (1).

[581] [577]

1. Among the Chiriguano nothing is appreciated but the manliness of a man and his goodness; looks, wealth, and the nobility of the house are of no value whatsoever.

When the young man is pusillanimous, a third person is used, as is done in every country. The third party also presents himself at night to smoke his cigar and explain the reason for his visit from the first night on, and naturally everything 584 cannot be arranged on the first night. He must come back 583 repeatedly, and meanwhile there must be no lack of gifts for the future parents-in-law. The suitor customarily also brings bits of firewood collected every morning at dawn, which the older people put into the room, whether the marriage is concluded or not (2).

584

2. Each day the person charged with making arrangements for the marriage, or the third

/221 cont./

Private Life

593 888 The father and mother take great pains for the material or corporal well-being of their children, both male and female, and they in turn have affection for their parents. Nevertheless there is no lack of creatures with very bad inclinations, who forget their parents' goodness, forget the labors undertaken by the latter in caring for them in their tender years, and abandon them in their old age in the midst of their suffering and privations.

593 861 867 273 The father and mother almost never address harsh words to their children; much less do they correct them with corporal punishment. The children attend the public drinking sessions in the company of their parents, and how strange it can seem to see father and son sometimes drunk together in the streets or in the plaza of the town! They see their fathers in other people's fields, taking advantage of the first fruits, and then the son does what he has seen. He hears his mother telling stories not at all clean, he sees acts not at all moral, he witnesses altercations in the house, hears his mother's jealousy, sees his father's bad deeds, and he thus will naturally follow the same path when he arrives at an age of competence and even before.

855 603 581 If the woman is very young when she is married, as often happens, it is the grandparents who take care of the grandchildren so that the young daughter may have more time to enjoy herself, since in the beginning /222/ marriage is nothing but fun for the young people (1).

855 593 606 1. Young girls help their mothers in the care of their own children and in the preparation of chicha, knowing that the drunken husband will first hit her, or even his parents-in-law if they try to protect her.

/226 cont./

881 178 do not advise anyone of their puberty, even their mothers, and the consequences are sad in no few cases. They do not tell anyone because the older girls make fun of them.

163 582 A single thing is noted in the missions, and it is that the neophytes, when they get to the age of about 35, stop having children. Perhaps this is because they marry very young, at about 16 to 20 at the latest. If it is true that the Chiriguano • 581 women of old were ready for marriage /227/ as soon as they came out of their hiding or fasting, the union which they contracted was certainly neither continuous nor for life with the same person. One or two months with one, then a rest until giving birth, afterwards again joining the same man, or perhaps she would seek out another if the first had become bored 790 with her or she with him. But this does not happen in the 581 missions; those who contract marriage do it for life, because it is a Catholic union and, as such, indissoluble, just as the natural marriage of the infidels would be, but the Chiriguano does not understand this, since in principle he wishes to be a hummingbird, coming to rest on many flowers and not stopping at any of them until he reaches a certain age.

881 785 184 In the districts where the fasting lasted for a year, such as in Cuevo, before the town of San Juan Bautista and the Santa Rosa Mission were founded, after the first rigorous month the maidens were made to eat meat and beans also, and they were even allowed to drink a little mild chicha, so that they would not become too weak or die. If the chicha had turned sour, it would be prejudicial for later married life, producing the effects of which I have already spoken.

881 178 177 Finally, to conclude such a delicate subject, let it be noted that at the present time the custom of such a rigorous fast for the female sex is observed in very few places; today the region is inhabited by the white race, which is making them understand that all this is superstition, because of the example of their daughters, who, in spite of the fact that they have done nothing of what has been said, live in perfect

Ee 581

/212 cont./

Marriages seem to me to be happy as a rule. In the village of the Chané chief Vocapoy, I had an opportunity to see several newly married couples. The happiness of the honeymoon month seemed to me unfeigned, and the young wives worked industriously for their husbands. Nevertheless, among the Indians, as among other peoples, there are women of different character. There were some who worked all day long for their homes, and others who seemed to live only to amuse themselves.

Ee 582

Sibling marriages are forbidden, whereas male and female cousins may marry (at least among the Chané).

Ee [771]

This, on the other hand, as has been mentioned, is not permitted among either the Choroti or the Mataco.

Ee 595

Among the Chané and Chiriguano there are some who have several wives. This is true, however, not for the young men, but for the older ones, especially the chiefs. Vocapoy had four wives, who lived in different villages. /213/ Taco is said to have seven, Maringay has two, who live together. Old Mandepora (Fig. 111) is also said to have a larger /Fig. 111 appears here/ number. These older exalted gentlemen often abandon their wives and acquire new, young, and pretty ones.

C [543]

Ee [586]

Ee 582

Except for these cases, the difference in age between the spouses does not, as a rule, seem to be more than a few years.

C 577 177 797 831

/214/ If one talks to the missionaries about the moral conditions among the Indians, especially among the Chiriguano, they paint them in black colors. The moral conduct of the Christian Indians is, I am afraid, very bad, but in the valleys where the white man has not corrupted the Indians I never saw an instance of promiscuous love, as among the Choroti. Maringay's village is typical of the old customs, and nowhere have I seen as strict morality as prevailed there. In these purely heathen villages no girl was ever offered to the members of the expedition, whereas this did happen at the mission stations.

C [837]

C 577 831 175

The following opinion is given by the Jesuit priest Ignace Chomé in a letter of 1736 (1), at a time when they were still

1. Chomé, op. cit., p. 318.

/214 cont./

581 This Jesuit priest describes the marriages of the Chiriguano, however, at very least.

581 273 With marriage, life begins in earnest for these Indians. It consists of work and drinking maize beer. I have already described their work somewhat; I shall discuss their drinking bouts below.

165 The life of the Indian men and women passes more quickly

142 291 516

Fig. 112. Old woman. Río Itiyuro.
Her grandsons were about 18 years old and younger.

165 than that of whites. The age of the Indian is very difficult to determine when one has no definite figures to go by. Maringay told me that he was the oldest of his tribe, that none of his contemporaries was living any more. The whites said that Maringay was over 100 years old. This is exaggerated, however. As a newly married /215/ youth 16-20 years old, Maringay visited